



Tamara GRIGSBY

State Representative
18th Assembly District

**Testimony Before the
Assembly Committee on Health and Healthcare Reform
June 12, 2007
Assembly Bill 173**

I want to thank Chairperson Vukmir for scheduling Assembly Bill 173 for a public hearing today.

The Council on Mental Health advises the Department of Health and Family Services, the Governor, and the legislature on mental health programs; provides recommendations on the expenditure of federal mental health block grants; reviews the Department's plans for mental health services; and serves as an advocate for the mentally ill.

Federal law dictates the proportion of members from different groups that must sit on this Council and given the current size of Council, 15 members, Tim and the other members are concerned that any unexpected fluctuations in Council membership could cause the Council to be out of compliance with federal law and thus put a great deal of federal funding at risk. They feel that increasing the membership to a minimum of 21 and a maximum of 25 that would allow them to better meet federal requirements and allows for a broader diversity of members and enough representation of consumers and advocates.

Community Aids Formula Allocation Expenditures for 2007

The Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services (DMHSAS) received \$7,538,575 in CMHBG funding. Counties' allocations for CY 2007 must be spent by December 31, 2007 and the associated expenditure reports are due to the Community Aids Reporting System (CARS) within 90 days of the expenditure deadline.

Supporters of this bill include Wisconsin Council on Mental Health, Division of Disability and Elder Services, NAMI Wisconsin, Mental Health Association of Wisconsin, Grassroots Empowerment, Access to Independence and Wisconsin Family Ties

I thank the committee for your time and consideration of this matter. Now, I'd like to introduce Tim Stellar, Chairman of Mental Health Council who can explain in greater detail how this bill will give the Council the flexibility it needs to meet its requirements under federal law.

STATEMENT by Tim Steller, Chair, Wisconsin Council on Mental Health

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH AND HEALTHCARE REFORM
WISCONSIN ASSEMBLY
PUBLIC HEARING
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I appear today to speak in support of Assembly Bill 173. In fact this bill has been introduced by request of the Wisconsin Council on Mental Health for which I currently serve as chair. I wish to thank Representative Grigsby and the other sponsors for introducing this legislation.

Simply put, this proposal allows the membership of the Council on Mental Health to increase from its current fifteen (15) members to not less than twenty-one (21) nor more than twenty-five (25) members.

Federal law requires that mental health councils have;

- 1) representatives of principal state agencies with respect to mental health, education, vocational rehabilitation, criminal justice, housing, and social services,
- 2) representatives of public and private mental health service entities, and
- 3) adults with serious mental illnesses and families of those adults or families of children with emotional disturbances.

Further, federal law specifies that at least fifty (50) percent of the council membership must be individuals who are not state employees or providers of mental health services.

The current limit of fifteen members makes it very difficult to meet these federal requirements. Further the Council believes that additional mental health consumer and advocate representation is necessary in order to adequately reflect the diversity of these groups in our State including geographic, age and cultural representation.

We ask you to support AB 173 so that the Wisconsin Council on Mental Health can include sufficient members to meet federal requirements and to allow a broader diversity of participation. Thank you.

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